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June 2016 Japan's No.1 English Magazine
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IN FOCUS

Beautiful cows enjoying fresh spring grass and posing for cameras near Mt. Fuji by Yulia Shumakova. Instagram: @thecashmeremuse



JUNE 2016

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TO-DO LIST

Check full event listings in the WATCHLIST online!
<http://metropolisjapan.com/watchlist>

安西水丸 「カディサーク自身のための広告」
 『象工場のハッピーエンド』(CBS/シー/講談社)より 1983年個人蔵



MAY 27-AUG 5 HARUKI MURAKAMI AND ILLUSTRATORS EXHIBITON

To say that Haruki Murakami changed the foundation of Japanese contemporary literature is an understatement. Like his heroes Jack Kerouac and Kurt Vonnegut, the award-winning novelist has made a huge impact in the world of literature. Outside of writing, Murakami is renowned for his affinity toward all forms of art, and the writer has worked closely with a select group of Japanese artists who helped transform his quirky imagination into visual form. In what is a world first, the Chihiro Art Museum will be commemorating the work of these illustrators, and the works will be displayed in chronological and contextual sequences. Among these artists is the late Mizumaru Anzai, an essayist and a close friend of Murakami's. **May 27-Aug 5. ¥800. The Chihiro Art Museum.** ❷ Kami-Igusa. www.chihiro.jp/global/en/tokyo/

Hiroaki Yoshida, "Presence of God" (2015), water color, acrylic, pastel, color pencil, pen, paper



UNTIL JUN 19 TWS EMERGING 2016

Since its establishment in 2001, Tokyo Wonder Site has undertaken a wide range of programs to support and foster young artists. One such program is TWS-Emerging, with Tokyo Wonder Wall, which has been providing budding talents with a gateway to success. Each year, 100 artists are selected from approximately 1,000 applicants, and are given the opportunity to take part in an exhibition at the Tokyo Wonder Site. For TWS-Emerging 2016, 18 young artists were chosen to show their works at TWS Shibuya. They are also invited to participate in a number of programs at TWS as well as residency programs conducted in association with overseas residencies under TWS's international exchange programs. **Until Jun 19, Tokyo Wonder Site Shibuya.** ❷ Shibuya. www.tokyows.org/english/shibuya/



JUN 2-5 FREE AT LAST: BEYOND THE RIVER

The Tokyo International Players collaborates with Tokyo Artistic Theatre Ensemble (TaTe), to present their production of *Free at Last: Life Beyond the River*. Written and directed by Tokyo-based playwright Wendell T. Harrison, the play is a thought-provoking re-examination of modern slavery, as seen through the eyes of a Japanese television producer. Upon visiting the U.S., Mieko, the play's protagonist, not only gets an education on slavery, but also begins to break free of her own cultural chains. Based on interviews from Born into Slavery, a collection of slave narratives from 1936 to 1938, *Free at Last* offers insights into the history of slavery and struggle for civil rights in 20th-century America. The play is a bilingual production, featuring both Japanese and English subtitles, and will provide speakers of either language a timely reminder of segregation, racism, and their lingering effects today. **Jun 2-5, various times. Ogikubo Showgekijo. ¥3,000-¥3,500.** ❷ Ogikubo. www.tokyoarts.org

©Naoko Takeuchi



UNTIL JUN 19 PRETTY GUARDIAN SAILOR MOON EXHIBITION

It's no secret that Sailor Moon is something of a social phenomenon, even after over two decades. The iconic *shōjo manga* remains among the most influential series in anime, rivaling Dragon Ball Z, and continues to enjoy high readership worldwide, with over 35 million copies sold in over 50 countries. Until mid-June, Roppongi Hills will be holding the Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon Exhibition, where fans and collectors alike will be enticed by a wide array of merchandise, as well as sketches for the popular '90s anime adaptation. Naoko Takeuchi, the mastermind behind the series, will also be showcasing brand-new works created exclusively for this world-first exhibition. **Until Jun 19, 10am-10pm. Roppongi Hills, 52F Mori Bldg.** ❷ Roppongi. www.roppongihills.com/tcv/jp/sailormoon/



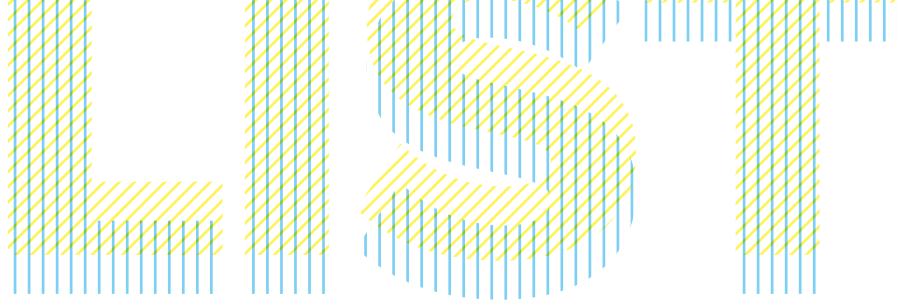
JUN 2-26 SHORTSHORTS FESTIVAL & ASIA 2016

Cinematography has come a long way since the Lumière brothers' public screenings. But even after the introduction of feature-length films in the early 20th Century, short films, or "shorts," have prevailed as a well-respected art form, captivating film devotees around the world. For Short Shorts, the organization behind the famous Short Shorts Film Festival, "shorts" is defined as a film whose duration ranges from one second to 25 minutes. This year, the organization will be holding its Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2016 in Tokyo. After receiving a record submission volume of over 6,000 films, the festival will be addressing diversity and cultural exchange under the tenet of "Explore your Emotions." As well as showcasing never-before-seen works from independent directors, the festival will also feature films from some of the best in the industry, including the Japan premiere of Martin Scorsese's *The Audition* (pictured). **Jun 2-26. Omotesando Space-O.** ❷ Omotesando. <http://shortshorts.org/2016/en/>



JUN 19-22 TAKE 6

For longtime R'n'B / vocal jazz fans, a cappella group Take 6 has been delivering quality grooves for over two decades. Ever since they released their eponymous, multi-platinum debut album in 1988, the sextet have gone on to record or appear with a number of luminaries, including the late Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald, as well as Stevie Wonder, to name a few. Now entering their 30th year together, Take 6 remains one of the most pre-eminent a cappella groups in the world. Upon hearing their swinging harmonies and rich vocals, it becomes apparent why the group was heralded by Quincy Jones as being "the baddest vocal cats on the planet!" This June, the 10-time Grammy-winning unit returns to Tokyo to showcase songs from their latest album, *Believe*. **June 19-22, 5pm-9pm. Blue Note Tokyo. ¥10,800.** ❷ Omotesando. www.bluenote.co.jp/jp/artists/take6/ (Japanese)



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Photo by Masaya Yoshimura

UNTIL JUN 13

THE WORK OF MIYAKE ISSEY

2015 marked a milestone anniversary in the career of the legendary designer Issey Miyake. After graduating from the Tama Art University in Tokyo in 1963, the designer returned to Tokyo in 1969 after working abroad, and established the Miyake Design Studio a year later. Miyake quickly made a name for himself by creating cutting-edge designs that combine manual traditional techniques with new technologies. Today, Miyake remains at the forefront of design, garnering accolades from innovators across various industries, including the late Steve Jobs, whose trademark black turtleneck was made by the Japanese designer. This year, the National Art Center Tokyo pays tribute to Miyake's 45-year career with "The Work Of Miyake Issey," where visitors can titillate their senses with more than 200 items of clothing. **Until Jun 13 (closed Tue), 10am-6pm (10am-8pm Fri). National Art Center, Tokyo. ¥800-1,300. 有明 Roppongi. www.nact.jp/english/**



JUN 11-19

THE 32ND ANNUAL BUNKYO AJISAI FESTIVAL

With all the moisture and sweat-inducing humidity, the rainy season in Japan can literally be a dampening experience. If you're in the right place at the right time, however, some sights can be very pretty this season: temples and shrines in the rain can be quite a prepossessing sight. Located in the heart of Tokyo, the Bunkyo ward maintains the atmosphere of Old Edo, and is revered for its natural beauty, courtesy of the city's abundant flora. During rainy season, over 3,000 *ajisai* (Japanese hydrangea) at the Hakusan Jinja shrine through Hakusan Park come into bloom. The Hydrangea Festival will be held at said shrine, and the sight of Hakusan Park covered in hydrangea offers pretty aesthetics and a communal atmosphere. **Jun 11-19, 9am-5am. 有明 Hakusan. www.city.bunkyo.lg.jp/ajisai.html (Japanese)**



JUN 16

SNARKY PUPPY

Jazz fusion seems to continue to gather life, long after the genre's original progenitors have passed. Born in the '60s and spearheaded by Miles Davis and subsequent acts like Weather Report, the style has evolved into myriad forms on different continents. Formed by bassist, composer, and producer Michael League, Brooklyn's Snarky Puppy take an orchestral, big-band approach that's found a home on influential imprint Ropeadope. While still celebrating their Grammy for Best Contemporary Instrumental Album in 2015, the group wasted no time in recording two follow-ups: *Family Dinner Volume 2*, which came out in February; and *Culcha Vulcha*, their first proper studio album in eight years. Given the warm welcome they received at Yokohama's Blue Note Jazz Festival last fall, as well as Japan's love for all things jazzy and funky, this gig is sure to blow the roof off. **Jun 16, 6:30pm. Akasaka Blitz. ¥7,000-¥8,000. 有明 Akasaka. www.creativeman.co.jp/artist/2016/06/snarky/**

Dan Grunebaum

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JUN 21-SEP 21

A JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF IMMORTALS: TREASURES OF ANCIENT GREECE

You need not be an archaeologist or historian to appreciate the wonder of Ancient Greece. The influence the ancient civilization had on modern society is immeasurable; it set the foundation of international sports, philosophy, and modern theater. The exhibition will showcase sculptures, fresco paintings, and metal objects from Greece from the Hellenistic Periods in various areas of Greece, such as the Aegean Islands—including Cyclades and Crete—as well as Athens, Sparta, and Macedonia. The first large-scale exhibition in Japan of artworks gathered solely from Greece, visitors can journey back into the land of immortals, and each work will be displayed in chronological sequence, in eight chapters. **Jun 21-Sep 21 (closed Mon). Heiseikan, Tokyo National Museum. 有明 Ueno. www.greece2016-17.jp**



JUN 23

NARUYOSHI KIKUCHI SOLO LIVE

Musician, writer, lecturer, radio-dj: these are but just a few of the many faces of jazz legend Naruyoshi Kikuchi. Along with fellow dignitaries Shin Kono, Yousuke Yamashita, and Midori Hara, Kikuchi made a name of himself as one of the most prolific musicians in the Japanese jazz scene. Avid anime fans may remember the saxophonist's sound from *Lupin the Third: The Woman Called Fujiko Mine*, in which he produced, performed, and composed the music. This June, Kikuchi will gather some of Japan's top jazz musicians to showcase tunes from *Mobile Suit Gundam Thunderbolt*. Music and anime lovers can witness the unlikely marriage of robot anime and jazz live, an experience that can only be had in Tokyo. **Jun 23, 6:30pm-10pm. Blue Note Tokyo. ¥6,800. 有明 Omotesando. www.bluenote.co.jp/jp/artists/naruyoshi-kikuchi/**



JUN 30

EDITOR'S PICK

SEIHO COLLAPSE RELEASE PARTY

Despite Japanese electronic music having existed in parallel to Western dance music for decades, the direction of influence has long been too much of a one-way street from West to East. But things are starting to change, and a growing number of Japanese producers are being heard abroad. The latest to venture overseas is Seiho, who drops his worldwide debut album *Collapse* from Los Angeles-based label Leaving Records next month. Bursting with broken beats and jittery synths, keyboards, and samples, the album combines danceable rhythms with pop-inflected melodies. Osaka-based Seiho touches down in Tokyo to launch the disc in an all-night "band set," featuring keyboardist Kan Sano and the Yasei Collective at Shibuya WWW. **Jun 30, 7pm. Shibuya WWW. ¥3,500-¥4,000. 有明 Shibuya. www.last.fm/music/Seiho**

Dan Grunebaum

SUMMER SONIC AND FUJI ROCK 2016

One man's dissection of the festivals' lineup

BY ANDY HUGHES

The time of year is drawing close again, for us all to blow tens of thousands of yen on a few days of glorious live music to diverge us away from our responsibilities and daily chores. So which of the "Big Two" music festivals will be the better distraction?

On paper, both festivals are suffering from fairly lackluster lineups compared to previous years. But there's more to it than the music, right?

SUMMER SONIC

Summer Sonic is held in Osaka and Tokyo at the same time, with the bands alternating days to play both locations, rather than cloning themselves or purchasing a Delorean.

The lineup for this year's Sonic looks like the slightly stronger of the two. Do you like Radiohead? Great, because they're headlining! Even better news: they are expected to be showcasing songs from their new album, *A Moon Shaped Pool*. However, I predict that Thom Yorke will be singing songs about being mildly dismayed—just a hunch.

Underworld are on hand to provide top-drawer entertainment for those who want to watch an old bloke muttering and dancing awkwardly whilst another old bloke presses some buttons. Should be a laugh. Who else? Fergie? I'm sure she was on the top of everyone's wish list.

Straighten your fringe, whip out your pink-and-black checkered wristbands, and wear your most chafing skin-tight jeans, because Bullet For My Valentine are back to serve up some memories of the emo fad.

But there's good news: Weezer and The Offspring are playing! For me, this is some very

welcome nostalgia. Weezer's first couple of albums are still a decent listen, and Cuomo's tunes about Dungeons & Dragons and being nervous around girls never fail to make me smile. The Offspring's latest offerings can be categorized as cringe-worthy, but no one can argue that they don't have a vast array of rousing pop-punk singalongs to fall back on.

Suede are also a welcome addition to the lineup, being one of the more interesting bands to come out of the Britpop era. If they play anything from *Dog Man Star*, I will be a happy chap.

Another blast to the not-so-distant past comes in the form of post-hardcore pioneers At The Drive-In. Even though Rodriguez-Lopez firmly denied there being any possibility in hell a few years back, not only have they reunited for these shows, but they will also be working on completely new music. Exciting! And this is possibly one of the last ever chances to see this seminal band.

Speaking of seminal, Dinosaur Jr. will also be making an appearance at the after-hours



©Masanori Naruse





event organized by Hostess Club. Just don't tell J Mascis that he sounds like Neil Young, though—he hates it! Adding to this list of big international names, there'll be a fine array of the most splendid local talent, such as Cero and Special Others—and many more.

FUJI ROCK

Moving onwards to the Naeba Ski Resort in Niigata, we have Fuji Rock.

The mighty Sigur Rós are the one big announcement that really made me consider opening my wallet for this



festival. To see them play in such a picturesque setting would doubtlessly be an unforgettable experience.

Beck is another high-profile addition to the lineup, who I'm sure is selling tickets with his name alone. Rumor has it that there'll be a dianetics stall next to the stage during his set offering free personality tests, so check that out if you feel like you need your life re-evaluated by a stranger, and want to digest some silly stories about an alien lord by the name of Xenu.

Babymetal are back with their pop idol-metal crossover racket, Battles return to Japan with their delightful experimental din, and Deaf Heaven satisfy the shoegaze hipster, black metal niche. I had a few genuine laughs scrolling down the lineup and noticing names like Kula Shaker and Stereophonics. Those bands still exist?

Oh, The Red Hot Chili Peppers are headlining too. I guess my eyes refused to absorb that information on first glance. Although their music is, to me, as enthralling as watching cold porridge drip slowly down a wall; I'm sure their candid tales of drug use and living under bridges will be lapped up regardless. Well, it could have been worse, could have been The Foo Fighters.

But never mind the line-up. This festival is an experience different from most, set in a beautiful location, and boasting plenty of other entertainment apart from the music. Did I mention that there's all-night hot-spring baths? If you're a grouchy snob like me, who actually experiences physical pain when subjected to some of these bands, you can always go for a dip in the hot spring and feel all your worries float away.

Like all other music festivals, it will be the thrill of discovering smaller bands previously unknown, and the new friendships made with fellow music aficionados that will make the trip worth it.

THE VERDICT

One festival is easier to access and has a slightly better lineup of well-known bands, but the other provides a rural getaway and a more traditional festival experience. Whichever one you pick, or both (lucky sod), you'll come back with countless stories to tell, and perhaps a new favorite band to irritate your friends with.

Just make sure you're not near me when Stereophonics are on stage. I assure you, it won't be pretty.

SAYUKI

Being a gaijin geisha isn't easy—but it can be fun

BY DAN GRUNEBAUM

Sometimes an interest becomes an obsession, and then a life calling. When Australian anthropologist Fiona Graham first came to Japan, she was a 15-year-old exchange student. But in time, she became Sayuki—a working geisha. *Metropolis* spoke with Sayuki about the trials and rewards of being Japan's first Western geisha.

Tell us about the first time you dreamed of being a geisha.

After I got my doctorate in Social Anthropology from Oxford, I started making programs for broadcasters like the BBC. I proposed a program about geisha; the project took on a life of its own from there, and I debuted as Sayuki—which means “transparent happiness”—in 2007. As with any geisha over the age of 21 or so, I debuted directly as a geisha. It turned out that it was impossible to make a program as the newest geisha in Asakusa. I couldn't ask questions freely of my older sisters, or ask them to participate in filming in the way that I would have needed to do as a director. So I had to put the program on hold and concentrate on becoming a geisha.

What was the hardest part of your training?

I went through a very strict, very old-fashioned training, where I went very heavily into debt for a whole year before I could debut. There was a lot of financial pressure on me and a lot of uncertainty about whether I would really be allowed to debut, which made my training very stressful. One of the biggest challenges facing the geisha world is how to finance the training of new geisha in the months before they can formally debut and work, during which time they have to pay for lessons but do not yet get paid.

What were the pluses and minuses of the book and film *Memoirs of a Geisha*?

Memoirs of a Geisha was based on very extensive interviews with a real geisha, so I think a lot of the details and color came from that real-life experience. It's a pity that many people don't register that it was a novel, not a nonfiction account, and that it was set in the pre-war period, not now.



What are the most common misconceptions about geisha?

So many misconceptions! The first misconception is that geisha are involved in sex work. Courtesans were involved in sex work, and geisha were not supposed to compete with the courtesans, even in old times. In modern times, if one wanted to be a prostitute, there would be many easier ways to do so than becoming a geisha! Many Western women have stereotyped views that geisha “pander” to men and are submissive. Geisha have always been working women, largely in control of their lives, even in earlier times.

What kind of people do your performances attract?

My smallest banquets are one customer, and my largest has been a thousand customers; the youngest customer one year old, and the oldest

in their nineties. Anyone can come to a banquet, and there are many other uses for geisha than just banquets. Geisha are often at the openings of new shops or businesses, we have entertained at trade fairs, we have performed at Narita Airport for the openings of new routes, and we can visit expats' homes to do private birthday parties. We love to travel overseas too.

What kind of expectations do foreign customers bring to your performances?

Many don't know what to expect, or expect a very formal occasion. Geisha love to drink, and love to have fun, and most of our banquets are very lively occasions. It's very easy to book a banquet or to call geisha to your own venue, just by contacting www.sayuki.net. We only need to know your numbers and your maximum budget per person, and can make all the arrangements for you.



MANY FOREIGNERS ARE ATTRACTED TO KIMONO AND DANCE, BUT BEING A GEISHA IS A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN JUST DRESSING UP AND PERFORMING.”

You were denied the chance to be “geisha mother” because you are not Japanese.

I left Asakusa after four years to establish my own independent geisha house because my geisha mother became ill and retired, and I was not allowed to become a geisha mother on the grounds of being a foreigner. I had initially planned to train as a geisha for a year, but at the end of the first year, I had only just debuted. And so I asked and received permission from the Geisha Association to continue as a geisha from that point on, under the same obligations and rules as any other geisha. So it was a shock when they did not apply their own rules about me becoming a geisha mother.

However, I still worked with Asakusa geisha at a banquet at an Asakusa teahouse the day after this happened, and have continued to work with Asakusa geisha and at some of the Asakusa tea houses all the time since then.

Unfortunately this was misrepresented in the media by one single journalist from The Daily Telegraph, and this was then copied by an intern at The Wall Street Journal, and then copied again into the Japanese media, while none of these papers at the time ever interviewed me or the Geisha Association.

Will the geisha tradition be able to continue without opening up to foreigners like sumo?

Any foreigner can arrive at a sumo stable and learn Japanese while they train. But the geisha job is a talking job. Geisha must be witty, wise, humorous, understanding, and provide perfect service in the context of Japanese society. It is simply not possible to do that without near-perfect Japanese. It is also illegal for a foreigner without long-term residency to work as a geisha, and if they attempted to do so, they would be putting their geisha house at risk.

Since I debuted, several [geisha] foreigners married Japanese. Thus, with long-term residency, [they] have worked as geisha in the countryside, where it is acceptable to be married. But that would be impossible in a town district. Apart from a Peruvian in Yugawara, these foreigners have now all quit. Many foreigners are attracted to kimono and dance, but being a geisha is a great deal more than just dressing up and performing.

At least one geisha house in Tokyo has succumbed to economic pressure and started running a companion business—kimono-dressed hostesses, something normally utterly unthinkable for geisha to do. I was told they have been ostracized by other geisha houses who did not want to share a geisha office in the same geisha district as a house doing this. One can imagine that such a geisha house in dire straits might try to recruit novelty foreigners with little or no Japanese skills as a publicity stunt, so it is a good thing that Japanese law protects against this cheapening of the geisha world.

Geisha work mainly in their own geisha districts, and fees are set in each geisha district

so that geisha are protected from having price wars with each other and with other districts, thus destroying their own livelihoods. One can imagine a situation where a rogue geisha who didn't understand these traditions and was solely focused on profit might enter, but this would be a catastrophe for the geisha world.

Tell us how Japan's tourism boom is affecting geisha.

For a period, at least some Japanese customers were not so interested in geisha in white makeup, and numbers of geisha correspondingly declined. But there is a revival going on now, and younger Japanese customers are quite similar to foreigners in their lack of knowledge of, and curiosity about, geisha; and see geisha as representatives of tradition as much as drinking companions. Tourists are actually wonderful customers for geisha, because they want to see the genuine article and appreciate the art of geisha.

Being a geisha must be very expensive. Tell us about some of the costs entailed.

A geisha in a high-class district can be wearing \$10,000 of kimono when she meets her customers, so there are very significant expenses in our attire. There are also heavy expenses for lesson fees. Geisha in Asakusa only learn from the top masters in each school and must pay lesson fees continually, whether they attend or not. My father was diagnosed with terminal cancer a few months after I became a geisha, and I had to frequently travel back to Australia to relieve my mother in looking after him. When I came back to Japan each time, I would face a mountain of accumulated fees for lessons I had not been able to attend. Eventually, [I] had to give up dance and tea ceremony lessons at the geisha office, and concentrate on music instead, which I could practice alone wherever I was.

One of the challenges in the geisha world is how to raise new geisha. I have had eight trainees in the last years who have gotten to the stage of attending banquets. I would like to see companies helping sponsor young geisha, in the same way that sumo wrestlers are supported. I am very open to offers to help my next young trainee start her career!

What do your mom and dad think of your career?

I grew up partly in Japan with a Japanese family and attending Japanese schools, so my real family has long had to accept that I chose a life that was not quite average!



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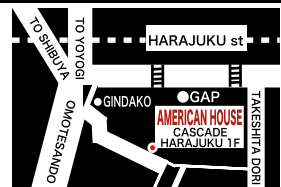
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TSUBAME GRILL

Serving up one of Tokyo's best burgers since 1930

BY KURT JACOBSON

Hidden in plain sight, amid a jungle of restaurants, is one of the best Western style-turned-Japanese eateries in Tokyo: Tsubame Grill.

Diners in the know queue up outside the Grill at peak hours for 30 minutes or more, in anticipation of the delectable meal that awaits. They know this burger, the Tsubame Hamburger Steak, hiding under an inflated dome of aluminum foil, atop a cast iron skillet, is one of the best meals for under ¥2,000 anywhere. Some of us Westerners would call it a Salisbury Steak, but it doesn't matter: it is delicious! Served with the oval beef patty is a bite-sized chunk of savory pot-roast beef, a few green beans, a small baked potato, and their mouthwatering gravy.

The only reason I found myself in this house of the rising burger is my father-in-law, a native of Tokyo but longtime resident of the U.S. On his business trips back to Tokyo throughout many decades, he discovered this eatery that's located next to the Shinagawa Prince Hotel.

Being a retired chef who has eschewed beef for most of my dining adventures, I was skeptical upon hearing my father-in-law's recommendation. But experience has taught me, during my eight



trips to Japan, my in-laws know their way around the restaurant scene. I was too tired and hungry to negotiate for a better eatery.

Scanning the dining room upon entering Tsubame Grill, I saw that most tables had ordered at least one of these famous burgers, obviously knowing what the place is famous for. Part of the fun of getting the house burger is tearing open the balloon-like dome and being inundated with

the intoxicating aroma of beef, onions, and seasonings, in a mouthwatering moment. My wife and I ordered the Caesar Salad, onion soup, corn soup, and the hamburger.

The best part of dining with my in-laws at new restaurants in Japan is that I get to taste what they order, too. Their choice was the cabbage roll and salmon. After tasting everything on the table that first night, I was convinced I'd found the burger was the best, by far, over the would-be contenders. The only thing missing was more of the tender green beans they tease you with, hiding under the burger.

Not to be outdone by the burger, their baked apple dessert is excellent, too. It's a fresh apple, baked, and cut open to

allow enough space for a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

The only downside was that the wait staff was a bit slow at times—maybe because the place was packed. But it didn't affect our meal.

Beer and wine are served. Beer is a better choice than wine here, and it sets the tone for a laid-back meal. Try it for lunch or dinner, but beware of a possible wait if you come during peak hours without reservations. Easily found across the street from Shinagawa Station's west entrance, the sign proclaims in English, "Ginza, Since 1930."

Tsubame Grill beckons diners to this Bavarian beerhouse-themed restaurant—and it doesn't disappoint.

Tsubame Grill. 4-10-26, Takanawa, Minato-ku. Tel: 03-3441-0121. Other branches throughout Tokyo. www.tsubame-grill.co.jp/store/



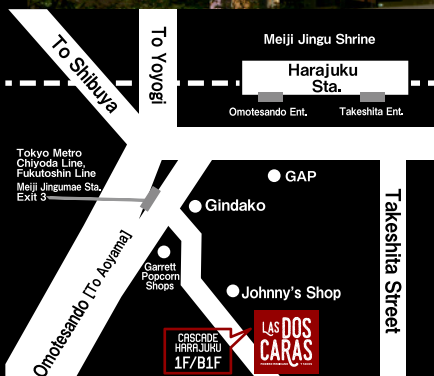


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SAKE NO SAKANA

Edo-Style Sipping and Snacking

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

While *ika shiokara*—squid pickled in its own digestive juices—might not be the first thing that comes to mind as something to nibble on while drinking, it is one of Japan’s revered “*sake no sakana*” (“snacks for sake”). This group of foods is considered optimal-flavor matches for sake, and has been united together on bar tops and dinner tables for centuries.

During the Edo Period, when sake production was scaled up and no longer reserved just for ceremonial and special occasions, sake no sakana became more commonly available. People started drinking in front of liquor stores, and enterprising proprietors started serving simple dishes to drinkers—a precursory move towards present-day *izakayas*, *tachinomi* (standing bars), *kadouchi* (sake shops with tasting areas), and the custom of snacking while drinking sake.

“Sake no sakana”—or simply “*sakana*”—translates to “sake and vegetables,” indicating that dishes originally served with sake were vegetables. However, over time, *sakana*’s repertoire grew to include other foods, mostly seafood. So closely did “*sakana*” become associated with fish that it’s now common parlance for “fish,” replacing the pre-Edo reading for the kanji “*ue*.”

Otsumami (“finger foods”) may be a more familiar term for drinking snacks in Japan, displayed on menus, packages of snacks attached to cans of booze, and grocery store labels. While the terms are pretty much interchangeable, they differ in regards to the type of beverage they’re paired with. While *otsumami*

when paired with certain dishes, intensifies the savoriness of the situation, making it all the more enjoyable.

Sakana can range from pickled dishes to more elaborate concoctions, including *saba he-shiko nukazuke* (mackerel pickled in rice bran), *iburigakko* (smoked pickled daikon), *oden* (tofu, daikon, and *konyaku* in dashi broth), *karashi mentaiko* (cod roe cured in salt and chili), *negitoro* (chopped raw tuna and spring onions), *momijizuke* (salmon and ikura cured in sweet soy sauce), *tofu misozuke* (tofu cured in miso, likened to a “vegan foie gras”), *tatami iwashi* (a dried “cracker” of baby sardines), and more modern adaptations like *kasu cream cheese* (cream cheese marinated in sake lees).

Within this broad genre of snacks is the slimy, pungent subset of *chinmi* (rare taste). These “delicacies” are usually more expensive, in very small servings, and are made typically of rare and unusual ingredients like *shirako* (cod sperm sacs), *ankimo* (steamed liver of the anko fish), *awabi no kimo* (ground internal organs of abalone), *komochi konbu* (kelp sandwiched between layers of herring roe), *kani miso* (crab *miso*, where “*miso*” refers to the appearance of a mixture of raw crab brains and internal organs, not the soybean paste), and *shuto* (the entrails of bonito fermented for months then mixed with sake, honey, and mirin). “*Shuto*” translates to “sake thief”—a nod to a pairing so magnificent, it encourages the taking of more sake!

Consistent with Japan’s preoccupation with identifying the “best three” of everything, the three greatest *chinmi* were identified by Edo-era

are more general snacks—*kawaki-mono* (“dry things,” such as peanuts and rice crackers), *yakitori*, *karaage*, and edamame—that go with a range of alcohol, *sakana* are specific to sake.

Generally, *sakana* are quite salty, to offset sake’s high sugar content. In the absence of a salty *sakana*, knowledgeable sake drinkers will often take a small lick of salt to refresh the palate. Sake has the highest content of amino acids of all alcohols, and

RECIPE

KARASUMI DAIKON

BY JESSICA THOMPSON



INGREDIENTS

- 1 sac of *karasumi* (dried, salted mullet roe), approx 12-15cm long
- 10cm length of daikon, sliced 3mm thick (apple, pear, and cucumber also work well)
- Drinking or cooking sake (optional; this softens the *karasumi* and adds a little extra aroma)
- Ponzu or sesame oil, to serve (optional)

SERVINGS
4

PREPARATION

1. Remove skin from *karasumi*.
2. Rub roe with sake. Add a little extra sake to a frying pan.
3. Heat the frying pan over a medium-high heat, and fry roe for 30 sec to 1 min on each side.
4. Once skin is crispy and the inside is still slightly soft and moist, remove *karasumi* from pan and cut into 3mm-thick slices.
5. Arrange *karasumi* and daikon slices on a plate, alternating the order. Serve as is or with a little ponzu or sesame oil.

connoisseurs to be *uni*, the edible gonads of a sea urchin; *karasumi*, mullet roe sacs that have been salted and dried in the sunlight, similar to the bottarga of the Mediterranean; and *konowata*, salt-cured intestines of sea cucumbers.

Conceptually a little more challenging for most than some salted peanuts or crisps, there is merit in honoring tradition to experience this attested *ii kumiawase* (“good pairing”)—even if only once, and even if it requires an extra tokkuri or five of sake to wash it all down.



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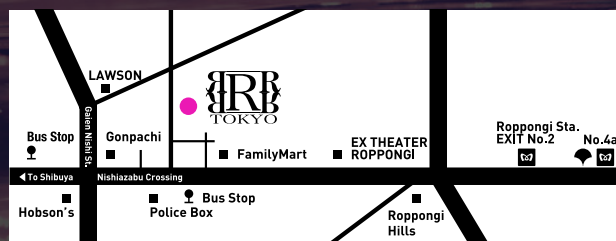
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TAKIGYO

For those who do go chasing waterfalls

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TAMATHA ROMAN

The list of rules was staggering: “No photos,” “No underwear,” “No bath afterwards,” “No talking to and from the site,” “No third party tours” ... and, perhaps most surprising, “No sex.” In fact, we were reminded of the last rule quite a few times—even at dinner. Upon seeing us, a couple, we were admonished with: “Remember, no sex!” Apparently *takigyo*, the ancient Japanese waterfall ritual, was more complicated than just a quick splash.

Takigyo, also called *misogi*, involves the cleansing of the mind and soul through a Shinto purification ritual. The “cleansing” occurs under a powerful mountain waterfall, which clocks in at a mind-numbing 10 degrees Celsius: a pain meant to evoke pleasure. The ritual is led by a Shinto priest who directs participants in a series of warm-ups, songs, and chants meant to cleanse oneself in front of the Gods and release impurities. Male participants perform the ritual while wearing a *fundoshi* (an undergarment akin to a diaper), while females sport a short white robe, leaving much more to the imagination. Afterward, at home base, a short ceremony is performed and a hot breakfast is eagerly consumed.

While few priests offer takigyo to the general public, 59-year-old Baba Yoshihiko has been providing courses since 2000 from Mount Mitake, a popular hiking destination west of Tokyo. Yoshihiko manages Komadori Sanso, a guesthouse close to Mitake Shrine that has been open since 1776, often accommodating hikers and pilgrims. These days, however, the guesthouse is seeing more visitors, especially foreigners, who are interested in the exhilarating chance to experience takigyo. Yoshihiko leads the ritual, in both English and Japanese,



almost every day of the summer, and once or twice a week during the other seasons, depending on demand.

Yoshihiko himself received his one-week takigyo priest training back in 2000 on Mitake, taking part in a cleansing every morning and evening. His love affair with water spans a lifetime. An avid water skier when he was younger, he actually tried takigyo for the first time at the age of 19.

“Water makes my heart feel good,” he told me after we finished the training. And I’m not surprised: Yoshihiko is the 17th generation of his family to practice takigyo. So it seems that it’s not only in his heart, but also his blood.

Our own training started at 5am. As I made my way out, the lady of the guesthouse pulled me aside and dramatically whispered in Japanese something to effect of, “Seriously, no bra. No panties.” They mean business!

Before we left, Yoshihiko informed us of an additional rule: “Don’t look behind you on the way to the waterfall.” Instead, we were instructed to walk in silent meditation and only focus on what’s ahead. With plastic bags in hand, we set off at dawn, treading along quietly for 30 minutes as we solemnly anticipated the waterfall’s inevitable temperature. The only sounds were bird calls and Yoshihiko’s hiking bell, which is meant to ward off bears. Considering



we weren’t allowed to look behind us, perhaps the bell was a wise investment.

Upon arrival, we split up to our respective areas to change. Being the only woman, I was directed to a private tent around the corner before rejoining the now mostly naked group of men. We spent about 30 minutes warming up. I chanted “*haraedo no okami*” (“God which serves to clean the body and heart”) over and over. I yelled at the mountain. I shook my hands and sliced the air, symbolizing this and that.

I don’t want to give too much away, but the actual waterfall part was definitely a shock to the system. And it’s a shock you experience three times, as per ritual. Clothing becomes see-through, but being in survival mode, no one cares. The cold, deep in my bones, was felt for hours.

Though I don’t need to experience takigyo again, I can understand how Yoshihiko reaps benefits from such an energizing early morning stimulation—much stronger than coffee. And even with an absence of sex, photography, or adequate clothing, the experience is certainly one for the books.

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I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW YOSHIHIKO REAPS BENEFITS FROM SUCH AN ENERGIZING EARLY MORNING STIMULATION—MUCH STRONGER THAN COFFEE.”





FEATURED MOVIE

WHERE TO INVADENEXT

In Michael Moore's most heartfelt, inquisitive and, yes, patriotic film to date, the unruly provocateur deconstructs the myth of American exceptionalism and gently prods the country to live up to its potential. He does this by taking a look at how other countries better implement originally American concepts.

France's school lunches are tastier, healthier and cheaper than the slop served to U.S. kids. The same country's sex education results in a very low teen pregnancy rate. College tuition doesn't exist in Slovenia. The month Italians get off every year results in increased productivity. Finland has done away with homework and standardized testing. Portugal has decriminalized all drugs and has a miniscule addiction problem. Sweden incarcerates its lawbreakers far more humanely and has a low recidivism rate.

Sure he gleefully stacks the deck; it's a Michael Moore movie. But there are a lot of inconvenient truths here, and the laughs each come with a sting.

Refreshingly for a didactic polemic, it goes beyond criticism and offers solutions. In the place of his usual acerbic tirades, the director suggests that if the country were to let go of some deep-rooted but wrong-headed concepts, it could realize a happier and more productive future.

(Off topic a bit but most interesting for the Japanese, with its criminally edited history textbooks, is how Germany assiduously teaches its kids about Nazism and the Holocaust.)

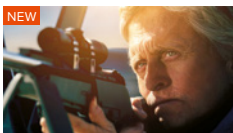
Some reject anything Moore says. These people will vote for Trump. All others will leave the theater thinking, and that's never a bad thing. Japanese title: *Michael Moore no sekai shinryaku no susume* (119 min)



BACKTRACK

This little creeper from *Down Under* brings little that's new to the psycho-thriller genre, but its understated approach,

good production values and a solid performance by Adrien Brody elevate it to watchable level. He plays a Sydney psychiatrist who discovers an unsettling common thread among his patients, and must delve into his own past to learn an even more unsettling secret before he can rest. It's so derivative that I kept waiting for him to say, "I see dead people." But as these things go, I've sat through far worse, and it did manage to make me jump a few times. Rainy day, maybe. Japanese title: *Shinrei Doctor to Kesareta Kioku* (90 min)



BEYOND THE REACH

A young hunting guide (Jeremy Irvine) takes a sneeringly rich big game hunter (Michael Douglas, in full crazy-cranky

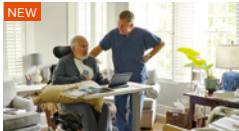
mode) out into the Mojave to bag a bighorn. When the dude mistakenly shoots a desert hobo, he decides to cover up the murder by forcing the boy to strip (great abs) and head out into the searing heat to die. There follows a vacuous, glacially paced, and wholly unsatisfying cat-and-mouse game that offers cheap tactics ("and then I woke up" is used *twice*), goofy third-act plotting and an absolutely horrible ending. Shooting for *No Country* desert-noir, but only gets as far as *Road Runner*. Japanese title: *Tsuigekisha* (91 min)



CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

Iron Man wants to curb a perceived destructive vigilantism and place the Avengers under UN

control. Captain America thinks that would hinder their evil-fighting autonomy. Factions form and fight. All this latest Avengers outing had to do was be better than *Age of Ultron*. It's more dramatically coherent and, for want of a better word, mature. I realize internal strife is built in to the title, but this "team" still spends way too much time fighting one another. OK, superhero movies are subjective. I was not edified or particularly entertained, but many still into the genre thought it was pretty good. (146 min)



CHRONIC

Most people have a hard time even discussing the subject of hospice nurses. In this film by Michel Franco (Best Screenplay, Cannes 2015), a mesmerizing Tim Roth does some of his best work in years as one such selfless worker. But his selflessness is so great that he has no real life of his own. His patients need him, to be sure, but perhaps he needs them more. He routinely becomes overly involved with them, even though he knows they will soon die. Sometimes, rather creepily, he "borrows" particulars of their histories when presenting himself to strangers. A haunting, off-beat portrait. Japanese Title: *Aru Shuen* (93 min)



GARM WARS: THE LAST DRUID

Mamoru Oshii, of *Ghost in the Shell* cyborg cop opera fame, takes a shot at applying *anime* ideas to a (heavily green-screened) live action flick. In English. The result is a visually stunning but dramatically inert hybrid that seems like an episode from a more complex franchise. Three forgettable species battle to extinction on a planet no one has ever heard of, motivated by impenetrable sociopolitical mythologies no one comprehends. A really old, gobbledygook-spouting Lance Henrikson embarrasses himself, and Kevin Durand can do way better. I had problems (1) understanding anything, and (2) caring. (102 min)



HAIL, CAESAR!

This affectionate satire of Golden-Age Hollywood from Joel and Ethan Coen is by turns clever and goofy; an homage and a send-up. There's no real plot; more a string of set pieces glued together by a tremendous Josh Brolin, a studio fixer who strides purposefully from this nut job to that ego crisis over the course of a "typical" day in his life. Taking part in the fun are A-listers George Clooney, Scarlett Johansson, Channing Tatum, Ralph Fiennes and Tilda Swinton. Call it "Coen Lite." But as you leave the theater, I wager you'll be saying, or perhaps even humming, "That's entertainment." (106 min)



THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

Here we have a mud-dled, financially mandated, committee-designed prequel/sequel (to the only marginally better *Snow White and the Huntsman*), kind of an adult, angrier version of *Frozen*. Featured are three talented, committed actresses (Charlize Theron, Jessica Chastain & Emily Blunt), none of whom is going unwasted, doing campy things and reciting bad dialogue (but looking great in Colleen Atwood's meticulously detailed costumes). A superfluous and frequently incomprehensible Chris Hemsworth stands around looking handsome. For all the star power involved, this one never really comes to life. Japanese title: *Snow White-Koori no Oukoku* (114 min)



LONDON HAS FALLEN

Gerard Butler's faltering career hangs on this movie. A sequel even worse than his execrable *Olympus Has Fallen*, this bomb stitches together every imaginable worn-out action movie trope, soaks them in screen-saver SFX, and stirs in a moronic us-vs.-them mentality. An impossibly heroic Secret Service agent (Butler), has to save the president's life all over again when cookie-cutter terrorists blow up half of London and most of the group of 7 leaders. Derivative, mean-spirited, sadistic, terror porn. Note to Butler: are you aware that your career arc is starting to resemble Steven Seagal's? Just sayin'. Japanese title: *End of Kingdom* (99 min)



MACBETH

Shakespeare's works have frequently been brought to the screen, but rarely with this kind of visceral, terrible beauty, and with such a talented cast and crew. Director Justin Kurzel's vision of the harsh world in which a good man goes murderous is stunning and unforgettable. The cinematographer is Adam Arkapaw. Michael Fassbender is utterly convincing in his portrayal of the ambitious title character's guilt-ridden descent into madness, and a haunting Marion Cotillard is a triumph of fire and ice as Lady Macbeth. The Bard would be glad to add this to his filmography. (113 min)



THE REVENANT

It means someone who has returned; the inference is... from the dead. A trappers' guide is horribly mauled by a grizzly bear and left for dead. But fueled by his need to find and punish those who did him wrong, he clings to life. This is of course a tale of survival and revenge. But it's done so beautifully that you could call it an art house action thriller. Terrence Malick meets Sam Peckinpah. Leonardo DiCaprio has never been so committed. And it is a testament to Tom Hardy's skill that I didn't realize the villain was he until the closing credits. So cold you may want to bring an extra layer. Japanese Title: *Revenant-Yomigaerishi Mono* (156 min)



ROOM

A kidnapped young woman (Oscar winner Brie Larson, *Short Term 12*) is held captive and repeatedly raped for seven years, giving birth to a son after two (a phenomenal Jacob Tremblay). When the boy turns five, they take desperate action. In lesser hands, this could have been a lurid, true-crime drama. But this is about the nature of freedom and the startling wonder of experiencing the world for the very first time. Scripted by Emma Donoghue from her acclaimed novel and directed by Lenny Abrahamson (*Frank*) without sensation or sentimentality, this is a unique cinematic experience. (118 min)



SEA OF TREES

A depressed Matthew McConaughey travels to Japan's Aokigahara "suicide forest," where he meets a similarly inclined Ken Watanabe. They bond, become injured and lost, and are soon, ironically, fighting for their lives. It takes 45 seconds for Ken to explain his despair ("I was demoted"), and the rest of this booed-at-Cannes trainwreck from Gus Van Sant to explain Matt's. A fake and forced suicide drama, a *ma-a-ma* survival adventure and a terminal illness, all topped off by a bit of insipid quasi-supernatural flummery you'd expect from M. Night Shyamalan. Feeling suicidal? This one will bore you to death. (110 min)



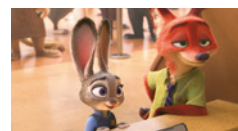
SPOTLIGHT

This is of course the deeply satisfying, 2016 Best Picture Oscar-winning story of how a crack team of reporters at *The Boston Globe* exposed the sinful behavior of the Catholic Church in ignoring or covering up systemic sexual abuse by pedophile priests around the world. It does not brag or glamorize its subjects, who would agree that, in the endangered field of investigative journalism, the process is more important than the reward. The marvel is that Tom McCarthy (*The Station Agent*, *The Visitor*) could fashion such a suspenseful movie from this restrained journalistic procedural. An absolute must-see. Japanese title: *Spotlight: Seiki no Scoop* (128 min)



STEVE MCQUEEN: THE MAN AND LE MANS

Actors that find success and wealth sometimes imagine themselves on the other side of the camera, and want to direct. Steve McQueen wanted to make the definitive film about his passion, auto racing. This intimate documentary by John McKenna and Gabriel Clarke is a study in how not to make a vanity movie. While few will rate *Le Mans* up there with *The Thomas Crowne Affair* and *Bullitt*, the film was undeniably formative in the actor's life and career. It also portrays the King of Cool as a kind of womanizing jerk whose artistic ambitions, though admirable, outstripped his filmmaking abilities. Japanese Title: *Steve McQueen: Eikou no Le Man* (102 min)



ZOOTOPIA

Diminutive Judy Hopps (voice by Ginnifer Goodwin) aspires to be the first bunny cop in the great city of Zootopia. Despite being relegated to meter-maid duty, she finds an unlikely ally in Nick Wilde (Jason Bateman), a street-hustler fox, in investigating a series of mysterious disappearances. This hugely entertaining Pixar-level effort from Disney Animation contains a great non-preachy message of inclusivity and multiculturalism for kids, and plenty of sly one-liners and sight gags for parents. It's so vibrantly realized, with such exhaustive background detail, that it may require a second viewing. (108 min)



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CINEMATIC UNDERGROUND

WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS

BY KEVIN MCGUE

The loosely-based-on-a-true-story **Des-sau Dancers** looks at the breakdancing scene in a very unlikely locale—communist East Berlin. In 1985, teenagers watch a smuggled copy of seminal film *Beat Street* and try moonwalking for themselves. When authorities brand it an act of subversion, the dancers convince them that “acrobatic show dancing” is actually good for the masses and get state funding. Busting a move at Human Trust Cinema Shibuya starting June 25 (Cocoti Bldg. 7,8F 1-23-

16, Shibuya-ku; www.ht-cinema.com).

Portuguese director Pedro Costa returns once again to Fontainhas, a shantytown in the capital Lisbon that was demolished a decade ago. The drug addicts and immigrants that were displaced by the urban cleansing have often served as subjects of his films, which tend to blur the line between documentary and fiction. His latest effort **Horse Money** follows an immigrant from Cape Verde as he looks for the places that once supported his life, all in

Costa's paced, painterly style. On from June 18 at Eurospace (1-5 Maruyamacho, Shibuya-ku; www.eurospace.co.jp).

The Icelandic film **Virgin Mountain** peers into the life of perhaps the loneliest man in the country—a hulking 43-year-old airport baggage handler who lives with his mom and has never had sex. But when Fusi falls in love with a pretty woman, he begins to break down the walls he has carefully constructed around himself. Starts late June at Human Trust Cinema Yurakucho (2-7-1 Yurakucho, Chiyoda-ku; www.ht-cinema.com).

The Turkish drama **Mustang** centers on five orphaned sisters living with guardians in a small village. When they are spotted innocently talking to boys, they are put under lock and key while arranged marriages are planned. On from June 11 at Cine Switch in Ginza (4-4- 5 Ginza, Chuo-ku; www.cineswitch.com).



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EIGA

AFTER THE STORM

BY ROB SCHWARTZ

Donald Richie, the great, late writer about Japan and its films, championed Japanese directors from the golden era of its cinema in the 1950s (Yasujiro Ozu, Mikio Naruse, Akira Kurosawa, et al), the new wave of the 1960s and '70s (Shohei Imamura, Nagisa Oshima, Kon Ichikawa, et al), and even a few from the 1980s (Sogo Ishii). He was, however, not much taken with most of the directors who made their fame during the 1990s and onwards, save one auteur, Hirokazu Kore-eda.

Kore-eda leapt on to the scene in 1995 with the brilliant and understated *Maborosi*, and has since then consistently made touching, expertly crafted work that often adopts themes like family, responsibility, and fate. Sometimes reminiscent of two of Richie's favorite directors, Ozu and Naruse, Kore-eda's newest flick would no doubt have pleased Donald as much as his past productions had.



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Ryota (Hiroshi Abe) is a prize-winning author who has not produced anything for more than 15 years. He's forced to take on sleazy detective work to earn money, but a gambling addiction sees him waste even that, despite the fact he has an 11-year-old son, Shingo (Taiyo Yoshizawa), and alimony to pay to his ex-wife Kyoko (Yoko Maki).

Knowing the boy is slipping out of his life, Ryota makes a weak attempt to win him back by promising to buy him a new baseball glove. When even

that goes awry, his monthly visit leads him to his aging mother (Kirin Kiki) and eventually to a heart-to-heart with the boy, brought on by a typhoon.

Touching and eminently realistic, the film captures the struggles of a less-than-successful man, the desire to reunite one's family, and the father-son dynamic. This is another tour de force by Japan's leading living director Hirokazu Kore-eda. Japanese title: *Umi Yorimo Mada Fukaku* (117 min.)



Cheap Trick has never had an issue with getting Japan to want them. The rockers have been a favorite in Japan since the late '70s, and their fanbase here is going as strong as the band. Moreover, Cheap Trick's celebrated 1978 performance at The Budokan is credited for putting the stadium on the global map as a venue that beckons the stars—and stars-to-be. Fresh off the release of their latest album *Bang, Zoom, Crazy... Hello*, lead singer Robin Zander and guitarist Rick Nielsen talk to *Metropolis* about their relationship with Japan.

CHEAP TRICK

Robin Zander and Rick Nielsen on Japan, the band, and new tunes

BY LAURIE TIERNAN

You first came to Japan in 1978 and immediately garnered a fanbase; meanwhile, in the U.S., your first few albums didn't initially do as well as hoped. Why do you think the Japanese were able to recognize your genius immediately?

Robin Zander: The main reason was that [Japanese people] liked our music, but the reason that they had even heard of us in the first place is because of bands like Kiss and Queen, for whom we had opened shows in the United States.

Do you think your love of The Beatles, a band that's also beloved in Japan, is a common thread that helped cement your relationship with the Japanese people?

RZ: I don't think it was just The Beatles, it was just the relationship that Cheap Trick had with the general radio content of the '60s, and the fact that we wore our influences on our sleeves.

Did Cheap Trick record "I'm Losing You" live in the studio with John Lennon, or were your parts recorded on separate days?

Rick Nielsen: We recorded live with John Lennon. It was just Bun E. (Carlos) and myself [with John Lennon].

Robin, you're famous for having worn a white suit from early on in your career. Was that a reaction to all the black clothing in rock music, or was there another reason?

RZ: I believe it's because I was just tired of it—all the black leather and all of that. My dad always dressed up in a suit when he went out to play—he was a musician as well—so I thought, "I'm going to do that."

You no longer tour or record with Bun E. Carlos, but he's still listed as an official member of Cheap Trick. What's the situation?

RZ: Well, the thing is that, over the years, things change, and you get different ideas of what you want to do with your career. Between Bun E. and myself, there was a division there that we couldn't come to terms with.

Cheap Trick first replaced Mr. Carlos for live performances with Rick's son Daxx. He seems to have mastered the former's feel for your classic tracks. Did he grow up playing Cheap Trick songs with his father?

RN: No, he actually grew up liking more metal bands, like Pantera and Metallica.

The new album *Bang, Zoom, Crazy... Hello* is the first one to feature Daxx on drums. He stays true to the classic Cheap Trick sound, but also brings in new and fresh elements where appropriate. Did that happen organically, or did you discuss it as a band?

RZ: I think it happened pretty organically.

RN: And, he called me "Rick," not "Dad."

The new album's title, *Bang, Zoom, Crazy... Hello*, is quite original. What's the story behind it?

RN: Originally, it was the name of one of the songs. [Then] Robin told me, "I still like that title. It's kind of like the four of us." So it saved us the trouble of coming up with something clever for the album title that you have to explain to everybody.

Some critics have stated that the new single "When I Wake Up Tomorrow" sounds like the late David Bowie. Was he ever an influence?

RZ: Bowie was always an influence, from Ziggy Stardust and before that, onwards.

If you could join any other band that is currently active, which would it be?

RZ: Let's see. I could join Queen! I could probably do that!

RN: I've become friends with guys in Pearl Jam, and I've become friends with the Foo Fighters. But I've got my own job, and I love being in Cheap Trick.

Do you have any plans to tour your new album in Japan?

RN: We'd love to. We've been totally busy getting the new record ready, and being inaugurated into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, but Japan is always on our minds, and one of our favorite places to play.



CHEAP TRICK

BANG, ZOOM, CRAZY... HELLO

BY LAURIER TIERNAN

Cheap Trick's first studio album in seven years opens with feedback and static that is offensive enough to announce that they play on their own terms—but it doesn't last too long that it alienates fans of their brand.

The noise sets the tone nicely for the songs that follow, as the band miraculously manage to stay raw and relevant nearly four decades after their legendary Budokan live album.

While *Bang, Zoom, Crazy... Hello* features a number of lyrical and musical phrases that might be derided as inexcusable clichés in the hands of others, the immediacy with which they are delivered emphasizes the fact that Cheap Trick are their originators. Lead singer Robin Zander even samples some of his own lyrics from 40 years past; but rather than coming across as lazy, the self-sampling confirms their legacy, while serving as an aural couch on which long-term fans may take a momentary respite from a lot of more modern music which sometimes seems tired in comparison.

The track listing on *Bang, Zoom, Crazy... Hello* represents some of Cheap Trick's most consistent work of the past three decades. The strongest tracks on this record are "Heart on the Line," "When I Wake Up Tomorrow," "Do You Believe Me?," "Blood Red Lips," "Long Time No See Ya," "The Sun Never Sets," and the album closer, "I'd Give it Up."

In brief, approximately half of the songs on this album shine brightly as standout tracks. "Heart on the Line" starts like the Stone Temple Pilots, then develops into a chorus that hints at The Beatles, before seamlessly bringing it all back to a classic Cheap Trick vibe. "I'd Give it All Up" rocks with a swinging dirty sexiness this band invented decades ago, while delivering it with increased efficiency. The only hint at slightly straying from the purity of their essence may be found in track three, the single "When I Wake Up Tomorrow," which some critics have likened to latter-day David Bowie.

In terms of musicianship, Zander has lost none of the strength and finesse in his voice, and Rick Nielsen's guitar playing is as delightfully raunchy as it ever has been. Bassist Tom Petersson's phrasing and rhythm are as reliable as ever. The one possible bone of contention for long-term fans may be that this is the first studio album to not feature founding drummer Bun E. Carlos. Replacing him behind the kit is guitarist Rick Nielsen's son Daxx, who, while holding true to the original drummer's feel, also adds the slightest spice of modernity and youth to this veteran rock band.

With an album like this, Cheap Trick prove to be one of the best hopes that a '70s band can remain true to themselves while staying fresh enough to be relevant.

***Bang, Zoom, Crazy... Hello* out now.**



YOSHIMI

TOKYO RESTRICTED AREA

BY DAN GRUNEBAUM

"The makeup on the face of the ancient city of Tokyo is plated by concrete," says producer Yoshimi Hishida in prefacing his new album, *Tokyo Restricted Area*, "but beneath its antiquities and modernities, the city is sick."

Fascinated by the "cracks within the concrete," Hishida takes listeners on an eerie sonic tour beneath the modern veneer of the metropolis to a land of spirits "older than when the human myth begins" that "transcend morality" and threaten to "assault us like an expulsion of a buried trauma."

The album begins with the washes, bleeps, melodic synth stabs, and nightmarish heartbeats of "Plated City," a track that signals the nightmarish tour-de-force that awaits. Wielding a palette of sounds that rise on a foundation of futuristic trap beats, Yoshimi seeks to present "an unknown story of these ominous memories of the land."

These memories and spirits are summoned on "Forbidden Place" through spare tribal percussion and what sounds like a resampled didgeridoo. Tribal vocal calls then hypnotize the listener on "Mizu no Onna" ("Woman of Water"), a track that reminds us that Japan isn't only a land of big-eyed anime girls and *kawaii* idols, but also an ancient territory suffused with superstition, ghosts, and goblins.

Traditional Japanese instruments sometimes intrude on what is fundamentally an outing of contemporary downtempo electronica. "Refoulement," for example, sports pungent shimasen pluckings, while on "Hidden in Concrete," a Japanese flute traces a lonely melody.

For Hishida, *Tokyo Restricted Area* represents a move away from his day job writing soundtracks for commercial film and TV to the land of international electronic pop music. He spent months composing the album after the Dream Catalogue imprint came across his work and, impressed, asked Hishida to put together an album that jibbed with the label's vision for "dream music."

The result is a style Hishida terms "Japanese Hell Trap," which, as the tag suggests, can at times be a very dark listen. Still, his tasteful deployment of traditional Japanese instruments, cinematic effects, and futuristic trap-style bass and percussion conjures a wholly original atmosphere that makes *Tokyo Restricted Area* well worth a listen. A series of equally dark videos is being released online to provide a visual counterpart to this mysterious musical journey.

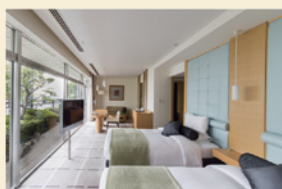
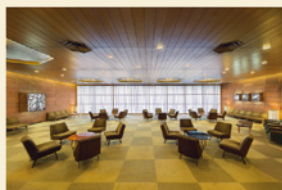
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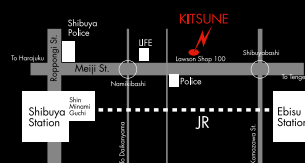
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TIPSY TALENTS

ArtBar Creative brings “paint and sip” to Japan

BY TAMATHA ROMAN

They say that alcohol can dramatically improve your foreign language skills. But can it also improve your artistic talent?

Find out at ArtBar Creative, a studio in Tokyo riding the popular “paint and sip” wave sweeping across the United States and Canada.

For those who’ve been living under a rock, the idea behind paint and sip classes is rather straightforward: get a little tipsy—if you choose—and attempt something that few people have a natural talent for: painting. All art supplies are included, and most studios allow participants to bring their own snacks and drinks. Basically, watch yourself magically transform into a slightly more awesome version of Van Gogh. You probably have seen photos of these classes on Facebook: your comrades, inebriated, holding frame-worthy paintings at United States establishments like Painting with a Twist or Pop the Cork. That’s because since 2007, the number of like-minded paint and sip businesses has increased rapidly, with hundreds of franchises now operating.

As with all popular Western ventures, the craze has since migrated to Japan. Artbar Creative opened in October 2015 in the heart of Daikanyama, promising a “modern night out for all enthusiasts to unleash inner creativity without inhibitions.” Run by Nicole Ciliberti and Bryce King, the team leads classes most days of the week, pulling inspiration for paint themes from



Japan and its seasons. It’s the only studio that holds paint and sip classes at regular intervals, not to mention offers complimentary snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and wine. Lots and lots of wine ... as in, *nomihodai* (“all-you-can-drink”).

Ciliberti stumbled on the idea for ArtBar during her MBA studies at Globis University in Tokyo. In one of her classes, a “Venture Strategy” project asked students to propose a startup. Seeing her

friends’ Facebook posts about paint and sip classes, and realizing Japan’s lack of any, she created ArtBar. The idea developed from there, and after graduation, Ciliberti began forming a team of artists—King, Ami Ichikawa, and Miwa Takahashi—all whom contribute to the creative direction of ArtBar.

What makes ArtBar unique in the paint and sip community is that they offer a range of classes to bring customers closer to all types of art through various media and perspectives, in both English and Japanese. There’s the classic beginner session, “Back to Basics.” “Tiny Techniques Thursdays” are dedicated to introducing art theory concepts, which tend to appeal to Japanese crowds needing more structure. “Mommy (or Daddy) & Me” are family-friendly sessions emphasizing fun and freedom. Other workshops, hosted by guest stand-in teachers, range from photography workshops to Japanese crafts. ArtBar can also accommodate different groups looking for a unique alternative to a birthday or bachelorette party.

For Golden Week, my friends and I decided to try out a “Back to Basics” class on a beautiful Wednesday evening. Located down a quiet alley, the small studio appeared like a beacon: well-lit, quiet, and intimate. Easels and paints were on standby as students chose a seat and secured themselves an apron, so as not to get paint—or wine—on themselves. A “model painting”—a street lined with colorful houses—was presented for us, which we all looked at dumbly before appreciating its necessary guidance. King led us through sketching an outline with pencil, how to mix the colors, and brush techniques. The paintings began to take shape.

During the class, the variety of talent was clear. Some people needed hand-holding throughout; others just did their own thing, choosing colors and styles that contrasted with the original. Those who drank seemed to care less—myself included—about taking advantage of Ciliberti’s generous refills of sparkling champagne. Regardless of our path, art was created, and I was impressed and surprised that everyone in the room seemed to find their own flair.

ArtBar makes for a great alternative night out in Tokyo—and unlike classes abroad, you don’t need to worry about a designated driver. Though classes are much more popular with women, Ciliberti hopes to change this; it would make for a great date night or a place to make new friends. But perhaps that best part of ArtBar is what you come home with: a hand-crafted souvenir, a well-rounded evening with friends, and possibly a hangover in the morning.

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GEMS AND JEWELLERY OF THE MEDICI

BY C.B.LIDDELL

If you want to enjoy an exhibition of Italian Renaissance art in Tokyo, you have two choices at the moment: “Caravaggio” at the National Museum of Western Art, and “Gems and Jewellery of the Medici” at the Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum. Later this month and next, you have even more choices, with “The Genius of Michelangelo” at the Shiodome Museum and “Venetian Renaissance Paintings” at the National Art Centre Tokyo—something to do with the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Italy and Japan.

The Caravaggio exhibition is particularly strong: 11 of the 60 surviving Caravaggio paintings are gathered here in Tokyo. But the National Museum of Western Art is hardly an ideal venue, with its brutal modernism and underground galleries. Those seeking a more aesthetically immersive experience may therefore prefer the Medici at the Teien.

The Teien is an elegant art venue in its own parkland, rather like Rome’s Borghese Gallery. Although in the case of the Teien, the building is in the art deco mode, not the Borghese’s late Renaissance style.

The exhibition focuses on jewellery with some paintings, and looks at the life and history of the



Cradle with Baby, Dutch, 1695
Gold, pearl, various jewels © Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Museo degli Argenti

Bronzino
Portrait of Maria de’ Medici (1551)
© A. Quattrone

famous Medici family, who rose to prominence in Florence through banking and politics, but whose modern fame mainly derives from their role as patrons of the arts. A striking portrait of the most famous Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent, greets visitors soon after they enter.

Overall, the paintings are not of the best quality; one naturally expects more from an exhibition hailing from a global art capital like Florence. The best-known painter here is the Mannerist Agnolo Bronzino (1503-1572), represented by a portrait of Maria, the daughter of Cosimo Medici, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany; and one by his workshop of her sister Isabella.

Both daughters had short lives. Maria died from malaria aged 17, while Isabella, an unusually



Giovanni Antonio de’ Rossi
Bust of Cosimo de’ Medici, 1556-57.
Cameo in Agate with gold. © Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Museo degli Argenti

independent woman for her time, appears to have been killed at 34 by her jealous husband. Bronzino’s smooth, lucid style gives Maria an enchanted doll-like appearance.

Other portraits tell similar tragic tales, including one of Joanna of Austria, the wife of Cosimo’s son Francesco. She is rumored to have been murdered by her husband so that he could marry his mistress, Bianca Cappello. Both Francesco and his mistress are also represented by portraits.

In almost all the portraits, the jewellery shines forth. In particular, pearls seem to have been popular; this is echoed in the

items of jewellery on display. There are several imaginative pieces based on the irregular shapes of larger pearls. One pearl is turned into a dragon, another into a dragonfly, complete with jewelled wings, and another into the naked breasts of tiny sirens.

There are also several small cameo works, relief carvings of stones—such as onyx, sardonyx, and agate—that have bands of different color, allowing the craftsmen to give the incised and raised

areas different colours.

The jewellery works displayed are exquisite, but this is also part of the problem. There is so much fine detail to see that one has to get really close up to see it, but the spacious display cases won’t allow this. Some additional thought should have been given to this technical aspect, perhaps by using some kind of magnifying display glass or other enlarging device.

Teien Metropolitan Museum of Art. Until July 5.



Thought to be by Luigi Fiammingo
Portrait of Lorenzo the Magnificent (1550). © Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Museo degli Argenti



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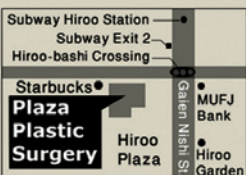
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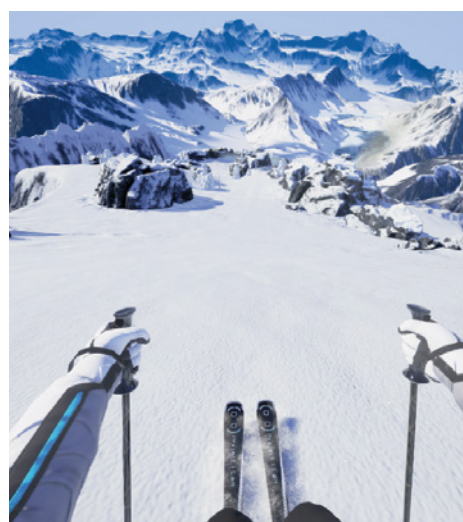
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ANOTHER REALITY

Experience VR in Odaiba

BY LINUS SCHMITT

2016 has been a big year in the world of Virtual Reality (VR). And with Oculus Rift and other similar units a little pricey for general consumption, Bandai Namco has you covered with their Tokyo pop-up, VR Zone Project i Can, in DiverCity Odaiba. The arcade showcases Bandai Namco's latest forays into VR, with a selection of impressive simulations equipped with snug-fitting HTC Vive headsets ready to transport you into a parallel world.

This was my first VR experience, so I probably bit off a little more than I could chew with my first pick. After purchasing a rechargeable access card for ¥300, I headed over to *Fear of Heights* (¥930), the arcade's only full-body simulation. Describing itself as an "extreme courage test machine," the simulator places you atop a 200-meter-tall building, where your task is to rescue a kitten who's stranded at the end of a protruding wooden plank. Try as you might to convince yourself that it's only a simulation, it's hard to keep cool as you traverse the rickety plank, which in reality is a narrow boardwalk a few inches above the floor.

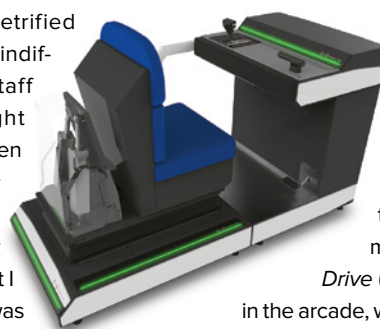
People with acrophobia, be warned. As the

information card cautions, "there will be no refunds for players who become paralyzed by fear and cannot move forward even one step."

My second pick was no less disquieting. In *Escape Ward Omega* (¥744), players move through an eerie abandoned hospital on a wheelchair while ghoulish, blood-stained villains slink about with malice.

Mistaking my petrified demeanor for indifference, one staff member thought he would heighten the drama by whispering "this is real" into my headphones. But I already knew it was real; in this gorey horror simulation, "VR" comes to mean "Very Real." Among the impressive features is a very tactile virtual flashlight that helps you navigate through the nightmare.

With my blood pressure dangerously high from the last session, it was a relief to wander over to the next simulation, *Train Meister* (¥651). Train buffs are in for a treat, as this simulation lets you play the conductor of the JR Yamanote Line. While the

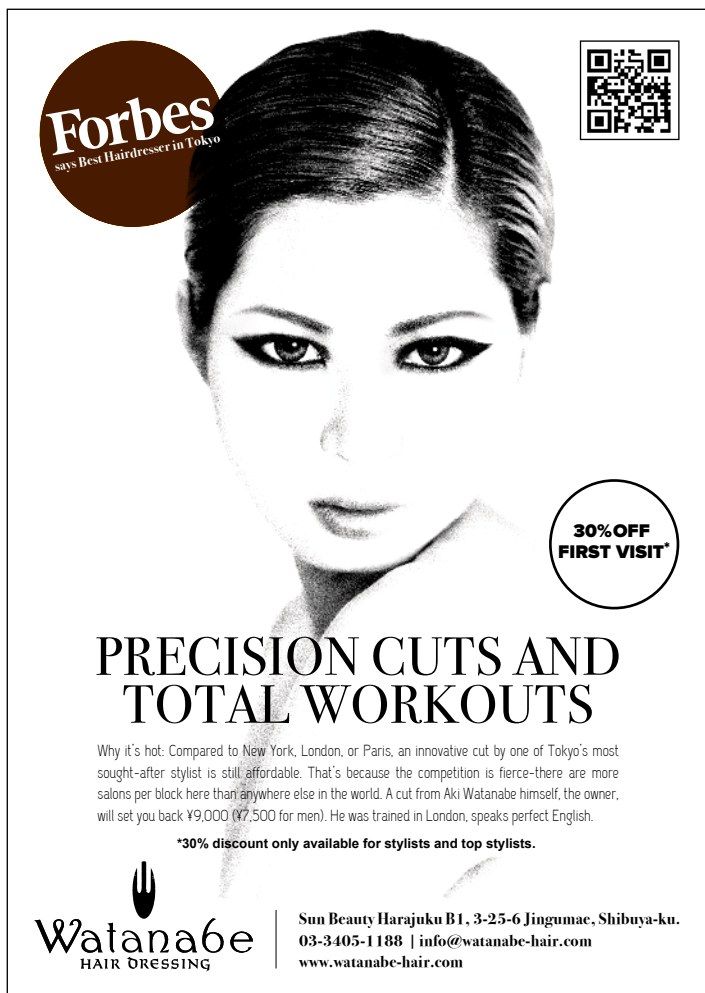


simulation lacks the action-packed thrills of the previous two games, there is a certain high-stakes tension in knowing that scores of virtual commuters have placed their trust in you. Post-game, a nifty diagnostic reports how well you regulated speed between stations. I did not do so well.

The remaining simulations include *Ski Rodeo* (¥651), a breathtaking virtual ski slope that pushes wind into your face—yes, the attraction comes equipped with a fan—as you glide across scenic terrains; *Argyle Shift* (¥651), a mecha combat game; and *Real Drive* (¥651), the only non-VR game in the arcade, with an impressively large panoramic screen.

The experience at VR Zone is, to borrow a worn-out term, nothing less than "immersive." Still in its infancy, the technology is naturally a little rough around the edges, but Bandai Namco is certainly making adequate headway into the arena. The future of VR shows great promise.

Until mid-October. Diver City 3F, 1-1-10 Aomi, Odaiba, Minato-ku. Open 10am-9pm (90-min rotations). Bookings essential. Tokyo Teleport. Tel: 03-5579-6141. www.project-ican.com



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Broadway Dance Center, a 30-year veteran in training professional dancers, held the grand opening of BDC Pilates in Omotesando/Minami-Aoyama in late April. It is the first studio in Japan to focus on group reformer classes, and with a limit of six people per class, participants receive the full attention of the instructor. English-speaking instructors available. Private sessions also offered. For a limited time, BDC is waiving its ¥30,000 membership fee. Trial lesson ¥2,000. Located a 30-second walk from Omotesando Station. **5F, 5-6-24 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo. E-mail: info@bdcpilates.com. (English OK.) <http://bdcpilates.com> **



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You can even bring your children along—no need to line up a sitter—and they might even spot one of the many celebrities who frequent the salon. **From-1st BF, 5-3-10 Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku. Mon-Fri, 12am-10pm; Sat, 11am-8pm; Sun, 11am-7pm. Tel: 03-6419-9933. <http://kei8330.wix.com/norahairsalon>** ☎ Omotesando



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Union Square is a new hair salon in Hiroo, run by Mika. Mika spent 15 years as a creative hair stylist at a trendy salon in the East Village in NYC. As such, she's experienced when it comes to cutting, coloring, and styling all hair types, allowing you to sit back and relax as your hair is treated as it should be. One of her specialties is the Japanese straightening treatment—covered by

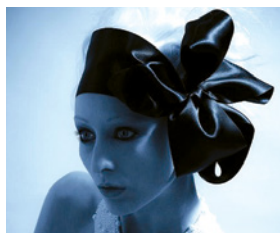
The New York Times—which does not use irons. You'll also be pampered with the Yume luxury shampoo chair and head spa. Mika is happy to offer a free deep-conditioning treatment or scalp massage to first-time clients. **201 Kitamura 60, 5-16-1 Hiroo, Shibuya-ku. Tue-Sat, 11am-8pm; Sun, 11am-6pm. Tel: 03-6721-9980. <http://unionsq-ny.tokyo>** ☎ Hiroo



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Alexandre started as a hairstylist and color specialist for blondes and brunettes in Paris 25 years ago. He moved to New York, and worked in Manhattan for more than 10 years at an upscale hair salon. For many years, he worked in the fashion industry for movies and TV (*VH1: Behind the Music*, *CBS News*, etc.), fashion shows (Lanvin, Nautica, etc.) and photography (*Vanity Fair*, *Teen People*, etc.), moving between Paris and New York, and now, Tokyo. He also specializes in make-up and body painting, and can provide make-up workshops for small groups at private homes. Alexandre understands that sometimes, people are unable to visit salons for cuts and styling, and so he is happy to make house-calls. By appointment only at home or at Lizerio in Omotesando. **Tel: 090-3520-6262. www.bba-japan.com**



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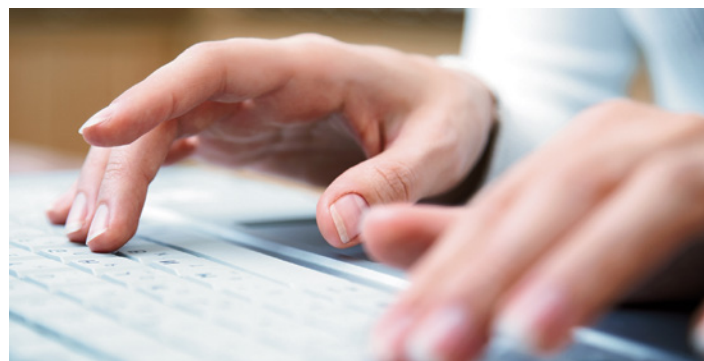
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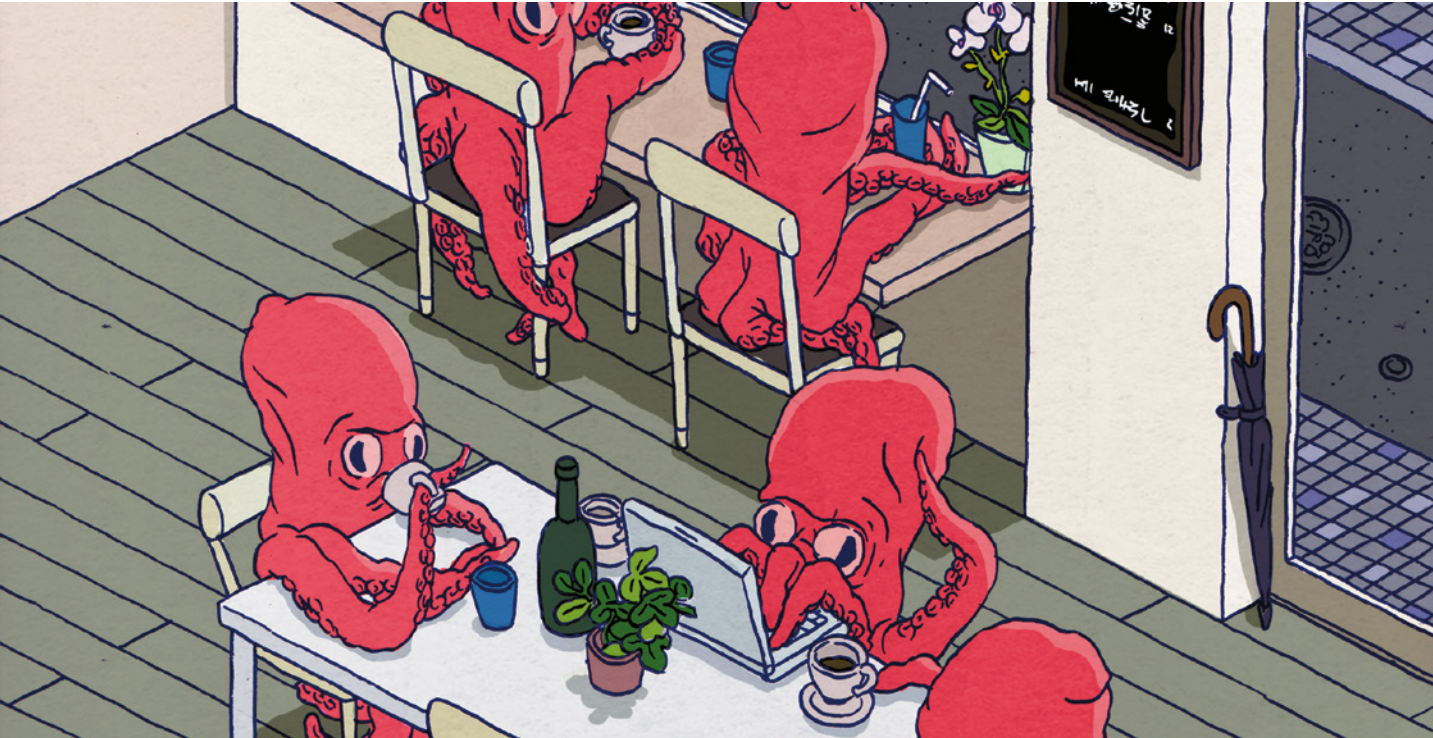
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OCTOPUS CAFÉ
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♥ Love ♣ Money ♠ Luck

ARIES
Mar 21-Apr 20 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

Others may be fact-checking while you're ready to move forward. Being the fire sign that you are, with your instincts, you may feel impatient to get on with it! However, if someone is helping what may be your future, it's worth showing you appreciate their efforts. In the meantime, you can invest yourself in other projects. Are you ready for a re-romance?

TAURUS
Apr 21-May 21 ♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

Things bust loose as you break free. Finally, a month worth your effort! And with a special someone, too? If it seems you have been set up without results, June can turn this around. A move may be imminent, but the pieces aren't quite put together. The stars are on your side. No one wants to see lovely Taurus with anything but beautiful surroundings and some cash in hand!

GEMINI
May 22-Jun 21 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

June is your month. How are you celebrating? Are you traveling to do it? Will you wait to see what Venus brings as she connects with the Gemini Sun? With the stars in your sign, you can do both! Self-confidence and happily distracting events find you without much effort. It's your time to shine and sparkle. Indulge a little! Treat yourself to what you want to do, when you want to do it.

CANCER
Jun 22-Jul 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

In the current climate, it's easy to have questions—but your true nature is a listening ear. At the same time, due to recent events, have you chosen to shore up your boundaries? This ability helps you manage money and create confidence when others cannot. June whispers of a bonus as Venus enters your sign mid-month. Cancers born in June are bound to have a birthday of bounty.

LEO
Jul 24-Aug 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

People see you as a leader and trust your judgment. While this is a Leo's lot in life, the month of June should have a vacation feel. If you can schedule some time away, or simply let your thoughts drift into lateral realms, you'll be ready for offers when they come in. You don't have to turn your life upside down. But you are likely to roar to remind others you're the boss!

VIRGO
Aug 24-Sep 23 ♥♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

Things are expanding all over for Virgos. If you're feeling stretched or extended, your energy may be pushed to the max. While it's not easy to say no, will you pull back in June? Use your natural discernment to choose a path without thorns. "If in doubt, don't go out." Better to use caution in social gatherings, rather than risk what you so carefully have been building up to now!

LIBRA
Sep 24-Oct 23 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

You can set the trends or be edgy, without giving up any of your magnetic attraction. June brings a time when a sense of relief and a freedom from others' expectations helps you get in touch with what you really like. Venus connects with the Sun and asks for a bit of travel, a spa day, or a spiritual make-over. What you need comes at just the right time to up your chances of success.

SCORPIO
Oct 24-Nov 22 ♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

June is a preparation for the life you envision. What is it that really makes your heart go pitter-patter? If it doesn't match what your friends think it should, or if, in the middle of a meeting, your negotiation button wears out, don't worry. Just go to the parties and lunches you're invited to. Laugh, trust, and know that something better will find you.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov 23-Dec 22 ♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

June has so many things to offer that you may not know which to choose. At the moment, it may be tricky for a Sag to say yes, because that will also mean no to something else. If you've offered your best compromise and it hasn't been accepted, let it go. Saturn is retrograde in Sagittarius for some time to come. Now, it's your turn to create your own foundation, doing what works for you!

CAPRICORN
Dec 23-Jan 20 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

Once you get into your groove, you're fine. Things move into place—after you put enormous energy into helping them get there—or they move out. While there are moments when it's nearly impossible to trust the bigger picture, as things fall apart, they're actually falling together. See yourself as part of a groundswell movement that won't be going away anytime soon.

AQUARIUS
Jan 21-Feb 19 ♥♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

You're likely to accept some risk-taking in June. The mind can only think of things in relation to what has already happened. While you may think it's a coincidence, the stars help you cross a metaphorical bridge—or a real one. By moving out of this comfort zone, you receive a bonus as Venus connects with the Sun. Children, romance, and personal expression are highlighted.

PISCES
Feb 20-Mar 20 ♥♥ ♣♣♣♣

What can you do about things set in place before you arrived? If you feel OK about stretching yourself, you can have much of June to yourself. Do your goals include moving into a position where your creativity is rewarded? There is financial backup and resilience for your income options. Ceres and Uranus bring a bit of a welcome surprise. Romance can be delicious.

Illustration by Christi Rochin



PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE, PERFECT AND IMPERFECT ALL AT ONCE

We travel the world to explore and discover the secrets of life, to experience new cultures, and hear new languages; but the longer I live abroad, the more I find that whether I'm in Japan, Nepal, England, Kazakhstan, or my home state of Wisconsin, some patterns are repeated.

Not far under the layers of a different language, religion, food, and culture are people and roles easily recognized. I see my father in a black-suited salaryman who offers his seat to the exhausted and hugely

pregnant woman on the train, moved by a heart that expresses itself through work and small gestures, rather than so many words. I see my mother in the woman who presses me with food even after I've eaten my fill, one of the best ways she knows to show her affection and regard. I see my niece in the young woman in my class who is both confident and shy, testing the waters of adulthood, and reflecting on what she finds. When the construction worker pauses a moment to photograph a rainbow or a bright blooming tulip nearby, I understand his sentiment perfectly. All around me, in this new country I now call home, I see so much that is familiar—echoes of so many that I know and love, friends and family alike, and even those I am wary of: the drunk woman who leans in too close, or the man who tends toward anger and violence.

People are people, perfect and imperfect all at once. Undoubtedly, each of us consists, too, of the complex combination of life events, circumstance, and personality that make us individuals. But there are also elements we recognize that allow us, however briefly, to understand and connect. We discover through shared smiles and laughter, by lending a hand or accepting a cup of tea, that in the end, whether home or away, our humanity is what we share.

■ Joan Bailey currently lives and writes in Japan. Read more of her work at JapanFarmersMarkets.com

PATTERN RECOGNITION

BY JOAN BAILEY



The other night, my friend Yoshimi asked if we could stop at her mother-in-law's house on our way home from shopping. "She's got some vegetables for us," Yoshimi said. "Would you mind? I don't think it will take long."

The light was on over the front door when we arrived at a simple two-story home on a narrow backstreet. Inside, Yoshimi's mother-in-law bustled in a tidy but very full kitchen. A low chair next to an even lower table took up the center of a dining room where the floors gleamed. In the white glare of the fluorescent light, I could see stacks of papers, old plastic containers, artificial flowers in pretty little vases set here and there, houseplants lined up in

front of curtained sliding glass doors, and off in a corner, the family shrine.

"You're so tall," Yoshimi's mother-in-law said as she offered me a seat at the low table and a cup of tea. I smiled and the three of us shared a laugh as she stood next to me for comparison. She only came up to my elbow, with her perfectly coiffed salt-and-pepper hair and tanned face.

Within moments, she offered us food to go with our tea. I watched and listened as she and Yoshimi moved about the kitchen together with ease, pulling containers of food out of the refrigerator, talking about this relative and that grandchild as they assembled the meal.

"You have too many dishes, Mother," Yoshimi said with a laugh and just a hint of exasperation as she knelt in front of a cupboard stuffed with small bowls, plates, and cups.

"I like them," her mother-in-law shrugged as she doled out homemade *tsukemono* (pickles) and steaming rice.

"Mothers are the same everywhere," I commented, and described how the cupboards in my own mother's house in the United States overflowed with dishes and knickknacks. Yoshimi and her mother-in-law laughed and nodded.



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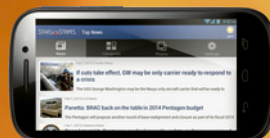
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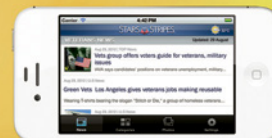


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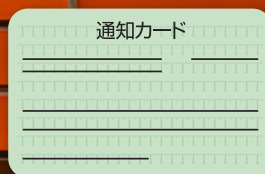
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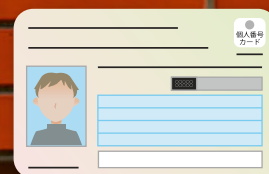
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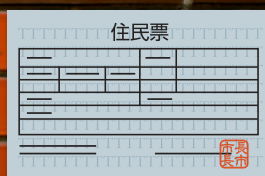
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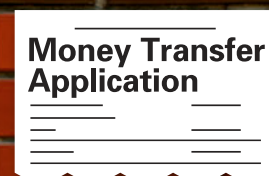
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